

Remarks/Arguments

The Non-Final Office Action mailed March 10, 2005 has been received and carefully considered. Claims 1 - 14 are pending in the application. Claims 7 - 9 and 12 have been allowed.

Claims 1 and 10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Taira (U.S. Patent no. 6,415,098, hereinafter "Taira") in view of Shima et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,556,221, hereinafter "Shima"). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

The priority date of the present application is November 25, 1997. Taira has a Foreign Application Priority date of December 22, 1997. Shima is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent No. 6,148,241 filed July 1, 1998. It is respectfully submitted that neither of these references can be used in a rejection of the claims of the present invention because the priority date of the present invention is before the priority dates of the cited references.

In light of the above remarks, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1 and 10 are not unpatentable over the art of record. Claims 2 - 6 and 11 depend directly or indirectly from independent Claim 1. It is, therefore, respectfully submitted that Claims 2 - 6 and 11 are also not unpatentable over the art of record. Claims 13 and 14 depend directly or indirectly from Claim 10. It is, therefore, respectfully submitted that claims 13 and 14 are also not unpatentable over the art of record.

Having fully addressed the Examiner's rejections it is believed that, in view of the preceding remarks, this application stands in condition for allowance. Accordingly then, reconsideration and allowance are respectfully solicited. If, however, the Examiner is of the opinion that such action cannot be taken, the Examiner is invited to contact the applicant's attorney at (609) 734-6440, so that a mutually convenient date and time for a telephonic interview may be scheduled.

Respectfully submitted,

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